# MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST NR-ELIGIBILITY REVIEW FORM

NR Eligible: yes

Property Name: Mont Alto Inventory Number: B-5074 Address: Northwest Baltimore City: Baltimore City Zip Code: 21210 County: Baltimore City USGS Topographic Map: Baltimore West MD Owner: Multiple Tax Parcel #: Tax parcel Map Number: Tax Account ID Number: Agency: CHAP Project: Healthy Neighborhoods staff X no yes Site visit by Name: Date: Eligibility recommended X Eligibility not recommended Criteria: X A B X C D Considerations: A B C D E F G None Is the property located within a historic district? X no yes Name of District: District Inventory Number: B-5074 Is district listed? X no yes Documentation on the property/district is presented in: Description of Property and Eligibility Determination: (Use continuation sheet if necessary and attach map and photo) The neighborhood of Mont Alto is an excellent example of an early 20th Century Baltimore suburb. The neighborhood is comprised of two developments - Beulah Villas and Mont Alto - that illustrate the incredible integrity and array of early 20th Century suburban architecture. Mont Alto, made up of highly decorated bungalows, foursquares and cottages, captures the incredible enthusiasm that developers, designers and Baltimoreans felt for the Suburban Ideal. Most houses Prepared by: Eric L Holcomb Date Prepared: 1/2/2002 MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW Eligibility recommended X Eligibility not recommended Criteria X A B X C D Considerations A B C D E None MHT Comments: Date Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services

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were not built by the A.I.A. sanctioned architects but by designers, developers and master carpenters who pulled their architectural design ideas from an array of

areas. Many of these developer/designers became influential and prolific architects. Mont Alto is a significant collection of high quality residential building and design.

## Baltimore's Suburban Beginnings

Baltimore first began to veer toward suburban design through the efforts of country estates, cemeteries and parks. On the plantation, between the headstones and amongst city park land, the pre-suburban characteristics found fruition. The summer estate was the wealthy Baltimorean's attempt physically and philosophically to frame beauty into their lives. Greenmount Cemetery was Baltimore's first attempt at creating a democratic arena with picturesque design principles. From the popularity of the cemetery movement, desire grew to build parks and adorn them with objects of romantic fancy that would lift ones spirit out of Baltimore and into a mythic utopia. Through the efforts of the country estate, the romantic cemetery, and the public park, 19th Century Man was changing its relationship to the natural environment.

From the design principles of the picturesque, the suburban details evolved. Essentially, the picturesque was a scene or view that "we" would think worth painting. This scenic landscape would be irregular, rough textured, mysterious, but not overwhelming, awe-filled, or life threatening. In many aspects the picturesque is the middle ground between the geometric formality of classical design, and America's wilderness. In 1822, William Wirt in a letter described his walk from Marsh Market to Henry Thompson's estate Clifton. The letter poignantly describes the picturesque setting in Baltimore:

The ground, which were originally poor, have been made rich; they lie finely, not flat or tame, or yet abrupt and rugged, but rising and falling in forms of endless diversity, sometimes soft and gentle, at others bold and commanding. This beautifully undulating surface has been improved with great taste, the fields richly covered with grass, the clumps of trees, groves and forests pruned of all dead limbs and all deformities, and flourishing in strong and healthy luxuriance. The sites for the houses are well selected always upon some eminence, embossed amid beautiful trees, from which their white fronts peep out enchantingly, for the houses are all white, which adds much to the cheerfulness and grace of this unrivaled scenery.

Here, Wirt described the northeast borderland of Baltimore. The importance of this description is not its accuracy (which is suspect), but the description of a desired landscaped of nature and architecture harmonizing with each other. Moreover, it captures how man can improve the beauty of nature by careful and selective management of the landscape. Today suburban landscape expectations are the exact same as that captured by Wirt. We see a well-trimmed front lawn as beautiful. When we see an uncut front lawn, we call the housing inspector!

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By the end of the 18th Century, Baltimore's elite was building magnificent town homes and summer estates just a few miles from downtown Baltimore. These summer estates were considered gentlemen farms where the wealthy could dabble in hobby agriculture. They were designed in typical classical details and Federal Period proportions. The land was used for agriculture and agricultural experimentation. Even though the land use emphasis was on farming, ornamental landscaping and picturesque influences were used to adorn the estate. From the paintings of Francis Guy, many picturesque details are seen. Terraced lawns, formal gardens in relation with larger landscape settings, well prune and diverse groupings of trees, pagodas, and winding walks are all design elements influenced by picturesque principles.

In addition, they also began to import picturesque principles from England. One example is the 1830s building of Glen Ellen, Robert Gilmore III's Estate. It was designed by Alexander Jackson Davis and modelled after Sir Walter's Scott Abbottsford. Gilmore's estate was 900 acres in size and held much land for horse raising and wooded areas for hunting grounds. The estate became America's first Gothic Revival mansion and introduced into Baltimore a new era of architectural design, one that allowed for the evolution for country estate development. The gothic castle, the gate and the carriage house were associated with the medieval period of England. It was a way to capture the settings of Sir Walter Scott's novels. In this sense, Gilmore was creating a retreat away from the Federal Period and Baltimore. Also interesting to note, was the relationship Robert Gilmore III's Uncle - Robert Gilmore Jr.- had with the landscape painter Thomas Cole. Robert Gilmore Jr. was a friend and patron of Cole, one who wrote profusely about the aesthetics of landscape painting.

During the mid 19th Century Baltimore summer estates started seeing a change from working farms (albeit hobby farms) to elaborate landscapes built for beauty. Elaborate gardens, boating ponds, gardener's cottages, and sculptures replaced crops, millponds, chicken coops and farm equipment. The wealthy were building havens of retreat. For example, Johns Hopkins Clifton by the mid 1860s was adorned with many sculptures, a boating pond, rose gardens, a private conservatory, imported and exotic plants, a Gothic Revival Garderner's Cottage, a Roman Gateway, and an Italianate Villa. On the grounds of Hopkins, you retreated away from Baltimore and into Renaissance Italy.

This retreat away from Baltimore is another basis for suburbia. To retreat to somewhere one retreats from someplace. And in Baltimore it was Baltimore. During the summer, epidemics abounded, sewage ran rampant and the noise from crowded streets pushed the wealthy to higher and cooler ground. In this sense the negative aspects of the urban environment contributed to the suburban ideal.

The desire that created the summer estates was the same desire that created the first suburban communities. In turn, the picturesque principles that respected a healthy mix of natural beauty and man's activities were also converted into other manifestations- but this time more democratic manifestations. In 1838 Greenmount Cemetery became Baltimore's first Romantic cemetery. Here, the cemetery was opened for everybody and only a few minutes walk away from Baltimore.

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But once in the cemetery the pastoral bucolic landscape overlooking downtown Baltimore created a natural healthy haven. In turn the gatehouse and chapel along with well placed trees and funerary art created an ambience with exotic flourishes. Here though, any citizen of Baltimore could come.

From the cemetery movement came the parks movement. In 1858 Central Park set the tone. In Baltimore Druid Hill Park was created in 1860 with the funds raised by the trolley tax. Druid Hill park was designed by Howard Daniels as a Romantic landscape full of the utopia evoking architecture landscapes. The park had over 17 structures designed in exotic styles, several ponds, a philosophers walk, a conservatory and a zoo. In Druid Hill Park you could travel and see the exotic. From these designs came the principles of Suburban development. In fact, Howard Daniels four years before was the landscape architect for Llewyllen Park, which is one of America's first picturesque suburb.

In Baltimore throughout the 19th Century many schemes of suburban development were built. Some lasted, some never took off, and some have changed into the unrecognizable. But by 1898 there were over 65 suburban subdivisions listed on the Baltimore County Bromley Atlas. By 1914 there were well over 200 suburban developments surrounding Baltimore. Baltimore is rich with suburban variations.

Baltimore's first attempt at suburbanization occurred as early as 1832 in Franklintown. In 1832 William Freman a wealthy merchant and horse lover laid out Freman's Oval in Franklintown. 41 lots were subdivided around a landscaped oval with a communal park called Washington Park. The oval was laid out on a hill so that the southern portion was terraced overlooked the Dead Run. An existing millpond in Freman's plan would have been landscaped with an island and a pavilion. They would have had large seasonal homes built on the lots. In 1834 the bottom fell out of the economy and the plan was never fully completed. Nevertheless, the oval still exists.

The plan converged on three other important developments in West Baltimore, the construction of the Franklintown Road and the Central racecourse, and the existence of the small mill village. With an identifiable route of communication with Baltimore, Franklintown was close enough to Baltimore in time to be a residential community. Secondly, the building of the Central Racecourse allowed this area to become inundated with the horse loving wealthy for several weeks out of the year. The Franklintown Inn built by 1830 held many events related with the Central Racecourse. And last, Franklintown had a small village that could help to support a sub-urban seasonal resort. Here, the area would have had two streams of income, one local and one based in Baltimore. In addition, there would be a local labor force to help maintain the area. However, By the 1840s, the area became a sleepy mill village until the suburbanization of the 1900s. In conclusion, Freman's Oval at Franklintown is a very early attempt at conscious sub-urban design using picturesque principles.

Then in 1852 Thomas Gorsuch laid out Homestead off the Harford Road. Homestead was laid out and built between Harford Road and Waverly (which was renamed from Huntingdon to Waverly after Sir Walter's Scott's novel). Four streets were laid out on an east/west axis. Lots measuring 16 x 90 feet abutted the main street and alleys. In the 1853

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and 1854 Matchett's City directory, the area was touted as being 300 feet above sea level and nestled neatly in between the grand summer estates of Johns Hopkins, Tiffany family, Gibson, Taylor and Tinge's family. Here the ad sells the suburban residences by their association and proximity to the grand private parks of the wealthy. This is one way of touting the natural beauty of the area. It is one way Homestead and Waverly area were mixing their urban and rural amenities.

Though this area was advertised in the Baltimore directory and catered to middle class residents with an economic connection in Baltimore City, the layout of "suburban village" was based upon city density and city design principles. The lots were the same size as many in Baltimore and the street grid with alleys were still intact. The country feel of Homestead relied not on landscape design, but in its geographic proximity to wealthy summer estates. Moreover, the architecture of the residences was based upon the Victorian design principles of country architecture as first disseminated by Andrew Jackson Downing.

In conclusion, Homestead catered to the middle class of Baltimore City, although it built its village on urban landscape design. The Village grew very slowly from the 1850's to the 1880s. It wasn't until the Harford Road Hall Spring's Railway that many of the lots were improved. Here, pre-Central Park, the suburbs were not consciously employing the picturesque design principles. However two years later, A preacher and a realtor created one of Baltimore's most beautiful suburban neighborhoods.

In 1853 developer George Gelbach and Reverend Elias Heiner began buying property in the Mt. Washington Hills. Within a year they had acquired three hundred acres. A visionary entrepreneur, Gelbach launched an advertising campaign in mid June on 1853 that stated the following:

The design of this enterprise is to furnish to those seeking it a healthy, retired and respectable country residence avoiding the monotony of a village or the crowding of the city, yet retaining the advantages of a community. The distance is sufficiently far to be free from the annoyance of the city rowdies and yet near enough to be cheaply accessible by railroad and pleasant drive by turnpike......The situation of this property is highly salubrious and picturesque; and although it is quite elevated, the land is not abrupt or broken but is very handsomely rounded in knolls and gradually sloping hills presenting numerous fine building sites, the ascent to which from the Railroad and Turnpike with the trains and carriages passing. Many of the sites have a handsome growth of forest trees, affording a delightful shade the grounds are laid off with fine, broad avenues, promenades, carriage drives, lakes, water falls and fountains.

Spurious at best, Gelbach crammed into his brochure any connotations that would arouse within the readers a warm feeling of bucolic living. In fact, in an unconscious way, Gelbach helped to articulate the Suburban Ideal, even though Mt. Washington never had broad Avenues, waterfalls and Lakes. George Gelbach had his finger on the pulse of the current day attitudes towards suburban living. In Gelbach's embellished description, he mixes urban characteristics with

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country adjectives. Promenades, broad avenues, and fountains are positive urban characteristics while waterfalls; lakes and forest trees are nice country characteristics. Gelbach was promoting the picturesque in suburban form.

In addition, Mt. Washington was advertised as a year round residence as well as a Railroad Stop for the Baltimore and Susquehanna Railroad. With these two characteristics along with the picturesque details, Mt. Washington pushed the evolution of suburban development in Baltimore another step further towards its early 20th century fruition. Nevertheless, like Homestead, the streets were laid out in straight lines, although the alley has disappeared.

By the 1870s Baltimore had a ring of suburban villages circling its perimeter. With the advent of the Railroad, as well as the Horse car, the areas available for suburban development expanded. Here, developers built and laid out their subdevelopments in various ways. Some of the more Prominent suburbs were Highland Park (which is now Walbrook), Catonsville and Sudbrook Park.

Highland Park was laid out in 1870. The area was approximately five miles from the city on land within Baltimore County (until 1888). These lots laid out on the grid were very large in which by 1876 thirteen cottages were developed. Here the cottages were in high Victorian fashion of Second Empire style mostly during the 1870s and by the 1880s, Queen Anne, Stick and Shingle Styles. Though the area was built on the urban grid, the country surrounding the village was dotted with summer homes and truck farms. In 1874 the magnificent Highland Park Hotel was built. In 1889 the hotel financially failed, but by the 1894, the area became an electric street car suburb and building intensified. By the early 1920s the eastern side of Walbrook was being developed with rowhomes, albeit suburban clad rowhomes. In the early 1890s Highland Park was one of Baltimore's most wealthy suburb.

Another interesting suburb was the village of Catonsville. Catonsville started out in the 18th Century as a small farm village on the outskirts of burgeoning Baltimore. But by 1861, Catonsville became one of Baltimore's first horse car suburbs. In 1861 and 1862 the Baltimore Catonsville passenger railway was built on Frederick Avenue. This allowed the area to be inundated with summer estates, suburban summer estates (large houses built on small plots of land), and permanent residences. Here the area grew as an exciting farm village along with its suburban presence. It was not exactly a subdivision built on an old summer estate, but a suburban development overlaid on a thriving farm village.

Sudbrook Park is Maryland's only residential development designed and laid out by Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. His firm headed by his two sons laid out many subsequent neighborhoods. Olmsted introduced into suburban design the curvilinear streets, generous use of trees and other plantings, and open green spaces for the use of the community. He also introduced into suburban development deed restrictions. Here, the maturity of the 19th Century suburban ideal was realized. The complete harmony of nature and architecture, streets and other amenities was created. This neighborhood set the tone for good suburban design, where not only physical urban and rural amenities were mixed, but the social amenities, a unique combination of private and communal space. Although you lived in privacy with a large front lawn as your buffer, spaces were created to promote social activities. The place was truly democratic for only one class.

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By 1893 suburban development was at its height. Roland Park was developed on the heels of Sudbrook Park. In 1893 Ed Bouton laid out the first parcel of Roland Park. By the time the second and third parcels were being laid out the Olmsted firm were intricately involved. Roland Park elegantly combined rural and urban elements. In addition to residential uses, deed restrictions, and liberal uses of foliage, the Roland Park combined commercial areas, country club and a nice train station. The combination worked exceedingly well and became a model of development in Baltimore and around the country.

Nonetheless, by 1910s, electric streetcar suburbs were running out all major Baltiimore truck roads. The 1898 Bromely Baltimore County Atlas lists 65 suburban subdevelopments. Thus, by the 20th Century, suburban development in Baltimore had a long and rich history. Dozens of variations on the themes for suburban development were created. Some areas were seasonal retreats, while others were built as religious communities that viewed their urban segregation with utopian eyes. Some suburban developments like Clifton, directly south of Druid Park was built with rowhouses. It was really the edge of Baltimore. Off the Harford Road were the Chicken suburbs. Based on the agrarian philosophy that soul salvation relied on good OLE' farm work, California and Woodholme were laid out with two acre lots with chicken coops and farm sheds to accompany the building of the house. The devil can't get your soul if you raise chickens. Other neighborhoods were built as city neighborhoods but designed with suburban principles while others were built as suburban neighborhoods but with urban design principles. In all, the suburbs of the first two decades of the 20th century were varied, but always expanding to allow the developments for larger and larger audiences.

Concurrently, the City and County were hashing it out in regards to the annexation. As early as 1912 there was an attempt at annexation that would have made Baltimore City 150 square miles. The City would have been chopped up into borough type city government. But the State Legislature did not have enough votes to pass the legislation. By 1918 with a strong tax break in place, and a much smaller size recommended for annexation, the city grew one last time to its current size of 90 square miles.

The annexation symbolized the growing concern of suburban residents. As they moved to the outskirts of the city, they moved out to enjoy the open land and rural flavor of the borderland region. Nonetheless, they wanted and needed- urban amenities to preserve their suburban character. They needed a comprehensive sewer and water system, electrical and telephone regulation as well as smooth and solid roads and bridges to Baltimore. Baltimore City municipal government was more equipped to handle such demands. Thus, the desire to preserve the country flare depended upon urban amenities. Again, Baltimore had the bureaucratic organization to carry this out.

The annexation of Baltimore City was carried forth by the large subdevelopments of the 1900s and 1910s, which Mont Alto was of the largest type. Here, in droves the upper and solid middle classes were moving out to the suburbs buying plots of land and building houses. It was the time where the suburban ideal manifested itself fully. Mont Alto is an intact premier example of a pre WWI Baltimore suburban neighborhood. As important to Baltimore is the significance of

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Mont Alto to Walbrook. In a sense Mont Alto was an extension of Walbrook which by 1910 was a forty year old suburb in its own right.

#### MONT ALTO AS AN EXTENSION OF WALBROOK

In 1870, when Highland Park perched itself on top of the hill, a suburban community was envisioned. By 1888 the community was annexed to the city making it politically urban, although it was perceptively suburban and rural. By 1889, North Avenue was extended to its current terminus. Shortly thereafter, on Saturday May 17, 1890, an electric street car ran from Highland Park to Division Street along North Avenue. The next day, the street cars began to run on schedule. On Saturday May 17, 1890, Walbrook proper began to transform, yet again, into another stage of suburbanization - The Street Car Suburb.

The North Avenue extension funnelled urban amenities into Walbrook at a phenomenal rate. A year later, after this extension, the electric street car rambled to its boundaries. Sidewalks and lights soon followed. Churches, private schools and stores were established. Walbrook Park became the proper name. The streetscape became more dense, houses were erected on empty lots, and the surrounding summer estates were being subdivided by development companies and builders. In 1892, Ridgewood [amusement] Park opened as a development project of the North Avenue Railway. The park quickly failed when Gwynn Oak Park opened. In 1894 Public School Number 63 opened and in 1900 Enoch Pratt Library Branch Number 8 opened as well as the Mount Holly Inn. By 1899 only thirty six house lots were left in the original 1870 subdivision of Highland Park. Walbrook needed to expand..

Guiding this development were prominent Walbrook residents who inherited large tracts of land. In 1894 most summer estates had disappeared. Several estates such as Beech Hill (Slingluff) and Walbrook (Galloway Cheston) were vacated by deaths. In the Baltimore American Souvenir Edition of 1894 the following story entitled Beech Hill was printed:

"The old mansion houses within the limits of Baltimore have nearly all disappeared. There are still a few of them left in the belt, but they too, are giving way to the inevitable. With the opening of streets, and the cutting up of estates into building lots, no room has been left for the plantation and surroundings. Beech Hill is one of the very few of the old houses still standing and its doom has been sealed. It stands in the bed of a street and has been condemned."

These heirs formed building associations, neighborhood improvement associations and were major stockholders in the North Avenue Railway. Dr. Frank Slingluff headed the Walbrook Mutual Building Association and the Walbrook Improvement Association. H. Webster Crowl, President of the North Avenue Railway, extended North Avenue and laid out the streets in Walbrook. The West Boundary Real Estate Corporation was headed by Francis King Carey, Lawrence Riggs and Elisha Perkins. These building associations printed many real estate ads such as this one:

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Walbrook Park: Churches and schools, best social influence Taxes sixty cents until 1900 Sale of liquor prohibited by law. Most desirable suburb of Baltimore Lots 50x150 to the Street Apply at office, North Avenue and Tenth Street

The West Boundary Real Estate Company placed an ad in the Sun on May 15, 1892 stating that J.B. Noel Wyatt built houses for Julian Leroy White, Lawrence Riggs, William Powell, L. Purnell, Jesse Hilles, John Semmes, and Henry Bowdoin. Like their fathers and grandfathers who formed several of the Turnpike Corporations fifty to eighty years before, they were improving their land. But unlike their fathers and grandfathers, they were improving the land for suburban houses to be sold instead of easier access to home, mill, and city.

Three distinct building procedures for detached housing were employed in Walbrook. The above ads describe one type of building procedure which the individual purchased a lot and hired an architect to design and construct a house. All these residents were wealthy and must have had a strong role in the design and erection of the houses. The second and third procedures differ slightly. A builder buys the lots and constructs the houses or a developer buys the land, subdivides it, and hires an architect and contractor to construct the homes. All three procedures were used between 1896 - 1912 to construct the homes on the old Bull Estate which was located in Between Garrison Boulevard and Windsor Mill Road. A Sun Article dated 4/7/1912 further describes the building procedure in this area:

A number of handsome cottages are in course of erection at Mont Alto. J. H. Cochran has just awarded a contract to Edward G. Turner for the erection of a two and half story frame cottage to be built on the south side of Carlisle Avenue near Garrison Avenue. It will be of ornamental frame with an overhanging slate roof and broad verandas with concrete foundation and will cost \$5,000 dollars. John J. Watson, owner of Mont Alto is erecting eight two and a half story frame cottages on the tract. Each will be of a different style of architecture and will cost from \$4,000 to \$6,000 dollars. Besides developing Mont Alto, Mr. Watson is interested in West Arlington and a place on Bush River. The Bush River tract, only recently acquired, has been laid out in building lots and about 20 bungalows are now in course of erection.

Whatever the building procedure, houses of different architectural styles and massing were erected. As well as the great influence the architectural profession held over housing, magazines and mail order catalogues influenced the architectural massing and detailing of many 20th Century developments like Walbrook Park and Mont Alto. As a result, streetscapes are filled with houses of many different styles, shapes and sizes. More than not, the mail order designed

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house was smaller in scale than an architect designed house. Catalogue cottages helped to democratize architectural styles in a time of a growing white and blue collar middle class. Walbrook of the 1910s, though exclusive in many ways, opened its land and development to a broader group of white middle class citizens.

The subdivision of Mont Alto - Beulah Villas and Mont Alto.

Mont Alto was the summer estate of George Reopold Vickers. The estate comprised approximately 150 acres on both sides of Liberty Road. George Reopold Vickers was mostly engaged in shipping, but also owned mills along the Gwynns Falls and invested in real estate ventures in Balitmore. The Mansion built by 1857 (as illustrated on the 1857 Map of Robert Taylor (but not listed as an estate on the 1850 Sidney and Browne map of Baltimore County). As depicted the mansion was rectangular in shape and ornamented with an Italianate cronice with a flat roof. The main portion of the house was a stucco, flat and smooth façade with a wrap around porch fortified with round doric columns. Most striking though was the dome set behind the house, used as an observatory. The builder of this mansion George Reopold Vickers died in 1875. In 1875 his son George took over his estate and began some improvements. In August 4, 1906 The Baltimore County Union wrote the following article on the property:

The late Mr. Vickers and His observatory on the Liberty Road - those who travel out to Forest Park, Gwyn Oak, West Arlington and Electric Park by way of Walbrook, says the Baltimore News, have noticed a roomy mansion 100 yards or so from the road on the right. The one thing that attracts attention is the dome, which resembles that of an astronomical observatory. One would think that the house was that of an astronomer.

The dome is really that of an astronomical observatory – the most complete and expensive around Baltimore owned by an individual. It was built as an observatory, and as such was used by one of Baltimore's leading merchants for twenty years. Today the big telescope contained in the dome is unused, and the digger wasps, better known to some as mud daubers, have built their earthen homes along the circlet and quadrant of the fine instrument therein.

The residence was for two decades the home of Mr. George R. Vickers, who for many years was a merchant of Baltimore. Mr. Vickers was largely engaged in shipping among other things, and in his hours of recreation he devoted a great deal of attention to the sciences. He was very fond of astronomy and microscopy, and when in 1875 he decided to build the house at Mont Alto (incorrect as discerned by the 1857 Taylor illustration most likely a typo of 1857), for such is its name, he determined that it should be equipped with an astronomical observatory regardless of the expense. Accordingly, the plans were made to include a large observatory large enough to mount an equatorial telescope 10 inches in diameter. The telescope cost no less than \$5,000. The work consumed some time, but when it was done Mr. Vickers had an observatory that gave him great satisfaction for the last twenty years of his life.

In addition to the large telescope Mr. Vickers had a smaller glass mounted on a tripod with which he was able to see for many miles. It has been said that Mr. Vickers, being a shipping merchant had the observatory built for the purpose of seeing his ships come in. This was an error, as was explained by Mr. George R. Vickers, Jr., the son of the proprietor of Mont Alto.

Mr. Vickers said his father was able to see as far as the mouth of the Patapsco from the windows of the house

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without the aid of a glass. He was accustomed to watch for the Norfolk steamers, in which he was interested. He could distinguish them by the black funnel, around which was a red band. When he would sight a steamer entering the Patapsco he would call his son George and send him on horseback to meet the vessel. The distance was about seven and a half miles from Mont Alto to the wharf, and the son would arrive at the wharf about the same time as the vessel. He would then get the letters and the papers for his father and return forth with to Mont Alto.

Not since 1880 (this date reaffirms the typo of 1875) had the big telescope been used. The house was closed in 1878 on the death of the widow of the elder Mr. Vickers, but since then it has been rented. Mr. George R. Vickers Jr. Inherited much of his father's predilection for scientific studies, but he has been so busy with other things that in recent years he has neglected his stargazing....

The Mont Alto estate comprised about 150 acres on both sides of the Liberty Roads. It is one of the most beautiful tracts of land about the city, but has not yet been developed. As it is immediately in the path of the development of the northwester suburbs, it will doubtless soon be subdivided.

As early as 1909 the Subdevelopement of Beulah Villas was being laid out and houses were being erected. By January of 1909 there were several houses being built along Roslyn and Elsinore Avenues. We find that in April of 1910 that the Highland Land Company was awarded the contract for curbing and macadamizing the streets through Mont Alto area. In addition at least thirty homes were under construction in the Mont Alto Area. We know by 1914 there were approximately 312 houses - 258 detached houses, 50 duplexes and 4 apartment houses. By 1929 117 houses were added as well as eleven rows of rowhouses.

Thus, by 1930 the neighborhood was completely built out and showed signs of mixed building types, although it remained predominantly detached housing.

Thus, the Mont Alto And Beulah Villas were two typical subdevelopments of the 1920s. During this time residential architecture in Baltimore in the newly annexed areas can be divided into two generally different patterns. From 1909 to WWI the houses tended to be large commodious houses built for an upper middle class. During the 1920s when Baltimore saw another tier of development occurring in Baltimore infill architecture tended to be for middle of the middle class with smaller houses on smaller lots. In addition rowhousing became a signinficant housing type in these neighborhoods after WWI.

During the 1910s, the houses tend to be large cottages, foursquares, commodious bungalows and a combination thereof. Many architectural features from the Victorian era survived: barge board, polychromatic slate roofs, bay windows, diamond glass windowlights, half timbered gables, brackets and dentils. Also, the Colonial Revival details along with arts and crafts motifs were found on these houses; cedar shake shingles, wrap around porches with doric columns and three-grouped doric columns, stone steps and foundations Gambrel roofs, broken pedimented dormers and shed roof dormers. Many houses were gabled fronted projecting a vertical feel. Others were side gable front mimicking the Colonial symmetry. Many cottages were a combination of colonial motifs and arts and crafts motifs.

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## Mont Alto

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Also, the foursquare came into being with Georgian Symmetry, pyramidal rooflines, doric columned porches and six over six windows accented with broken pedimented dormers. Others seemed to be top-heavy bungalows. Bungalows most of which were built in the 1920s (not all) tried to hug the ground extend the roof over the porch creating an outdoor space integral to the indoor floorplan. Most had square porch columns cedarshake shingles and exposed rafters in the second story shed dormer that topped the porch. A combo-bungalow was topped not with its iconic shed dormer but a gabled dormer that still sat snug on the sloping shed roof of the porch.

These combinations were mixed fluently with one another as design moved from an arthitects drawing table, to mailorder catalogue to draftsman table in a builder's shop. They traded elements and shape and form allowing the Cottage principles of vertical lines, high ceilings, asymmetrical shapes with bulges and pop-outs to comingled next to bungalows and symmetrical foursquares. This is middle America and traces the changes that occurred in suburban thought and architecture in the 1910s and 1920s.

These architects listed below were prolific at the Baltimore residence, the garage or the store remodelling. Some but not all built large commercial or financial buildings downtown or in mid-town. Most built houses, rowhouses, duplex and the garden apartments. Several of these builders built few houses in Upper class surburbs of Roland Park, Homeland and Guilford, but most stayed in the proliferating subdivisions in northeast and northwest. More research is needed to complete the design story of these architects of Baltimore's suburbs.

1/06/1909 - To Cost about \$4,000k, a handsome suburban cottage will be erected on the west side of Elsinore Avenue near Highland Avenue by Everett S. Eppley. Architect Henry J. Tinley has completed plans. The contract ahs been awarded to John D. Baker. The proposed cottage will be 55 by 140 feet. It will be one and a half stories high of the bungalow type The foundation will be of heavy stone laid in cement and the roofing will be of slag.

1/19/1909 - Plans are being prepared by Architect Stanislaus Russull for 5the erection of five three-story brick dwellings on the east side of Chelsea Terrace, between Clifton Avenue and Winsdor Mill Road, for W.T. Russell. The dwellings will be 22 by 36 feet. The foundations will be of concrete. The aggregate cost will be \$12,500

1/20/1909 - A handsome brick and stone dwelling will be erected on Roslyn Avenue, near Beech Avenue for Mrs. H. C. Chaney. The plans are being prepared by Architect F. E. Beall. The proposed house will be 2 1/2 stories high of pressed brick and stone trimmings. It will have a slate roof and concrete foundation fronting 30 feet on Roslyn Avenue. The house will have a depth of 33 feet

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Mont Alto

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1/27/1909 - Five handsome brick and stone dwellings will be erected on the south side of Windsor Avenue, between 11th and 12th Streets by T. F. Hare. Plans and specifications for the dwellings are being prepared by architect Jacob Gerwig. Each of the proposed dwellings will be 16 by 56 feet. The foundations will be of heavy stone and concrete. The dwellings will be of fancy buff brick with stone trimmings. The cornices will be of ornamental galvanized iron. Latest improvements, including steam heat and electric lights, will be installed. The cost for construction alone will be about 12,000. work of erecting them will begin immediately.

1/23/1909 - Permit was granted yesterday to William SI

Chaney for the erection of a two-and-a-half story frame cottage on Roslyn Avenue near Beach (now 33rd Street). The cost will be about \$5,000. Fronting 35 feet on Roslyn Avenue the proposed dwelling will have a depth of 38 feet. The foundation will be of concrete and the roofing of slate. Steam head and electric lightning will be installed. The flooring will vbe of parquetry and hardwood and a broad veranda will front on the home. Work of erecting the dwelling will begin at once.

1/26/1909 - Contracts for the erection of 15 modern two-story brick and stone dwellings on the south side of Herbert street, between 8th and 9th streets, for Mrs. Mary Fear have been awarded to H. W. Thomas Plans for the dwellings have been completed by architect F. E. Beall. The proposed houses will be 13 by 35 feet. The foundations will be of heavy stone laid in cement, while the cornices will be of fancy galvanized iron. Work will begin at once.

1/30/1909 - Many developments are being made on the Beulah Villas tract. The Provident Realty Corporation will begin at once the erectiong of four handsome suburban homes. Already about 20 dwellings in course of erection are almost completed. Plans have been prepared by Architect Henry J. Tinley for four additional houses on the tract. They will cost in the aggregate about 16,000. each will be 2 ½ story hight and will front 35 feet on the west side of Elsinore venue near Beech Avenue, They has a depth of 30 feet. The foundations will be of heavy stone laid in cement while ane roofing will be of slate.

2/02/1909 - Two modern suburban dwellings will be erected on the Beulah Villas tract by the Provident Realty Company. Plans are being completed by architect Henry J. Tinley for the erection of a 2 ½ story cottage on the east side of Elsinore Avenue and another on the West side of Roslyn near Beach Avenue. Each of the proposed dwellings will by 30 by 30 feet. Foundations will be of blue stone laid in cement, while the roofs will be of slate. Cost @\$9,000.

2/07/1909 – Twenty modern two-story porch front dwellings will be erected on the south side of Windsor Avenue near Eighth Avenue, by J G. Daneker. Plans and specifications for the proposed dwellings are being prepared by Architect J. F. Hampton. The tract on which the dwellings will be erected was recently bought by Mr. Daneker from Horace S. Whitman, representing the Slingluff estate. It fronts 302 feet, with a depth of 160 feet to a 20-foot alley. The foundations will be of heavey stone liad in cement. They will be equipped with the latest conveniences, including

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Mont Alto

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sanitary plumbing and cement cellars.

2/19/1909 – Two handsome and modern suburban dwellings will be erected on Roslyn Avenue near Beech Avenue by Mr. Everett S. Eppley. One will be be the northwest corner of Roslyn and Beech Avenues and the other will adjoin on Roslyn Avenues. Architect Henry J. Tinley has completed the drawings and the contracts have been awarded to George Seibold. Each of the cottages will be erected on a lot measuring 60 by 148 feet. The cost of construction will be about \$4,000.

2/20/1909 – Mr. A. C. Judefind has commissioned architect John Forsythe to prepare plans and specifications for a handsome suburban dwelling which he will erect on the north side of Dorchester Avenue, between Garrison and Chelsea Avenues. The proposed cottage will be 2 ½ stories high and will have a frontage of 30 feet, with a depth of 25 feet. Contracts for its construction have already been awarded to H. R. Turnpin and the work will begin at once. The foundation will be of heavy stone laid in cement. Roof slate @\$4,000.

2/21/1909 – Architect George R. Morris has completed plans for a 2 ½ Story frame cottage on the east side of Elsinore Avenue, near Beech Avenue, Walbrook, for Mr. Robert L. Hooper. The dwelling will have a foundation of heavy stone liad in cement, while the roofing will be of slate. Modern improvements will be installed. The cost for construction will be about \$4,000.

3/04/1909 – The providend Realty Corporation, through Pearre E. Crowl and H. G. Odenwald has sold to Mrs. Anna B. Genso a lot on the east side of Roslyn Avenue, near Beech Avenue, being a preotion of the Beulah Villa tract at Walbrook.

3/06/09 - Mr. J F. Hampton, architect, has copleted plans for Mr. Jerom G. Daneker builder, for 20 brick dwellings to be erected on the south side of Windsor Avenue Between 7th and 8th Streets, Walbrook. One of the buildings will be 17 by 65 feet, with steam heat and the other 19 will be 15 by 60 feet each, with hot-air heat. The houses will be built on a concrete foundation and the fronts will be of Roman brick, trimmed with marble. The total cost will be about \$50,000

3/06/09 – Mr. E. S. Blsvkdhrtr will erect two one story brick dwellings buildings in the rear of 3417 and 3419 Chesapeake Avenue, Walbrook. The foundations will be stone and concrete and the dimensions 14 by 12 feet. The cost will be \$300

3/06/09 – A new moving picture parlor will be put in commission at Walbrook as soon as improvements can be made to the building at North avenue and Ninth Street, formerly used as a store. The changes will be made by J Ranft, builder, and will cost about \$2,000. The property is woned by Mr. William Fernandis.

3/06/09 Hnery J Tinley, architect, has completed plans for the Provident Building Association for a dwelling to be

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Mont Alto

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erected on the east side of Roslyn Avenue, near Beech Street. The building will be two-and-a-half storys and its dimensions 35by 28 feet. It will cost \$3,500.

1910

1/13/1910 - M. Fillmore Carter has purchased a large lot on the south side of Presstman Street between eighth and Ninth streets, Walbrook, from the Walbrook Land Corporation through G. Howard White. By this Mr. Carter has acquired three large lots in Walbrook. The others are on Belmont Avenue, south of Presstman Street. Some of the property now ownded by Mr. Carter has been improved with semi-detached cottages. Newport style, and the unoccupied lots will be improved with cottages of similar style. Plans are being drawn by Architect Stanislaus Russell. The fronts will be of Roman pressed brick, laid in red mortar joints, and will have two porches in front and two in the rear. The foundations will be of blue stone in cement. The lastest improvements will be installed, including electric and gas lights, steam heat and refrigerators. There will be 76 cottages built, costing avout \$200,000. Robert H. Carr was the counsel for Mr. Carter.

4/30/1910 - John J Watson president of the Highland Land Company, who recently was awarded the contract for curbing and macadamizing a number of streets and avenues through Mont Alto tract north of Walbrook, has closed several deals for large lots this week. At least 30 homes are under now under construction and workman are engaged in installing water (----) gas and sewage systems

1911

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3/25/1911 - The Provident Realty Corporation has sold to Charles Bertram, through P{earre E. Crowl and H.G. Odenwald, a lot at Beulah Villas, Walbrook on the west side of Elsinore Avenue between Beech and Mondawmin Avenues, together with a 2 ½ story frame cottage now under construction on it. It will be completed June 1 after which Mr. Bertram will occupy it.

4/2/1911 - Augsburg Evangelical Lutheran Church Garrison and Bateman Avenues, one story stone edifice cost \$18,000 J. E. Laferty Architect, C.L. Stockhausen builder.

4/2/1911 Luther Martin 2 ½ story frame dwelling. West side of Garrison Avenue between Alto and bateman Avenues; 32 by 32 feet Cost \$5,000 J. F. Hardy Architect and builder.

4/2/1911 - M Fillmore Carter 15 two story dwellings east side of seventeenth street between Clifton and Holly Avenues, 15 by 50 feet each cost \$32,000, Stanislaus Russell, architect.

4/30 1911 - Provident Realty Corporation, 2 ½ story frame cottage east side Elsinore Avenue, between Piedmont and

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Mont Alto

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Alto Avenues, 26 by 33 feet slate roof wood cornice, steam heat \$4,000 Henry J. Tinley architect owner and builder.

7/02/1911 - Francis H> Wyatt, one story ornamental frame bungalow, west side Chelsea Avenue, between Duvall and Woodland Avenue300 by 47 feet slate-roiof steam heat cost \$3,500: M.H. Murray architect: .Murray and Haynes, builders.

7/02/1911 - Mont Alto Groves Company, 2 ½ story ornamental frame dwelling west side Allendale road south of bateman avenue 26 by 32 feet feet slate roof \$4,500 D.C. Slonaker architect and builder.

7/09/1911 – Mont Alto Groves Construction Company, 2 ½ story ornamental frame dwelling west side of Allendale Road south of Bateman Avenue; 26 by 32 feet slate roof, wood cornice: steam heat \$4,500 D.C. Slonaker Architect and builder.

7/09/1911- Philip H. Minor, two 2 ½ story frame dwellings, east side Garrison Avenue south of Alto Avenue; 22by52 feet each: slag roofs; wood cornices; hot water, \$6,500: S. Russell architect; B.W. and E. Minor, builders.

7/09/1911 – Murray and Haynes, 2 ½ story frame dwelling, south side Duvall Avenue between Garrison and Waldheim Avenues; 26 by 33 feet, tin roof, hotwater heat cost \$3,500; M.H> Murray architect, owner and builder.

7/16/1911 H.J. and M. J. Tinley, 2 ½ sotry ornamental frame apartment house. Northwest corner of Roslyn and Bateman Avenues. 30 by 80 feet, slate roof steam heat \$18,000.

7/16/1911 Murray and Haynes, 2 story plus attic ornamental frame dwelling south side Duvall Avenue just east of Garrison Avenue; 27 by 30 feet hot water \$3,500. M. H. Murray, architect, owner and builder.

7/23/1911 – Mont Alto Groves Construction Company –  $2\frac{1}{2}$  story ornamental frame cottage, west side Allendale Road between Bateman and Alto Avenues: 27 by 40 feet, slate roof, steam heat cost \$5,000. D.C. Slonaker Architect, builder and owner.

7/23/1911 – Plans for the erection of a parsonage for Starr Methodist Protestand Church at Mont Alto have been completed and work of construction willstart at once. The chapel has been finished. The Stone shuch buildg of the Augsburg Lutheran congregation also being built in Mont Alto is well advanced toward completion, and will be ready for service in one month.

1913

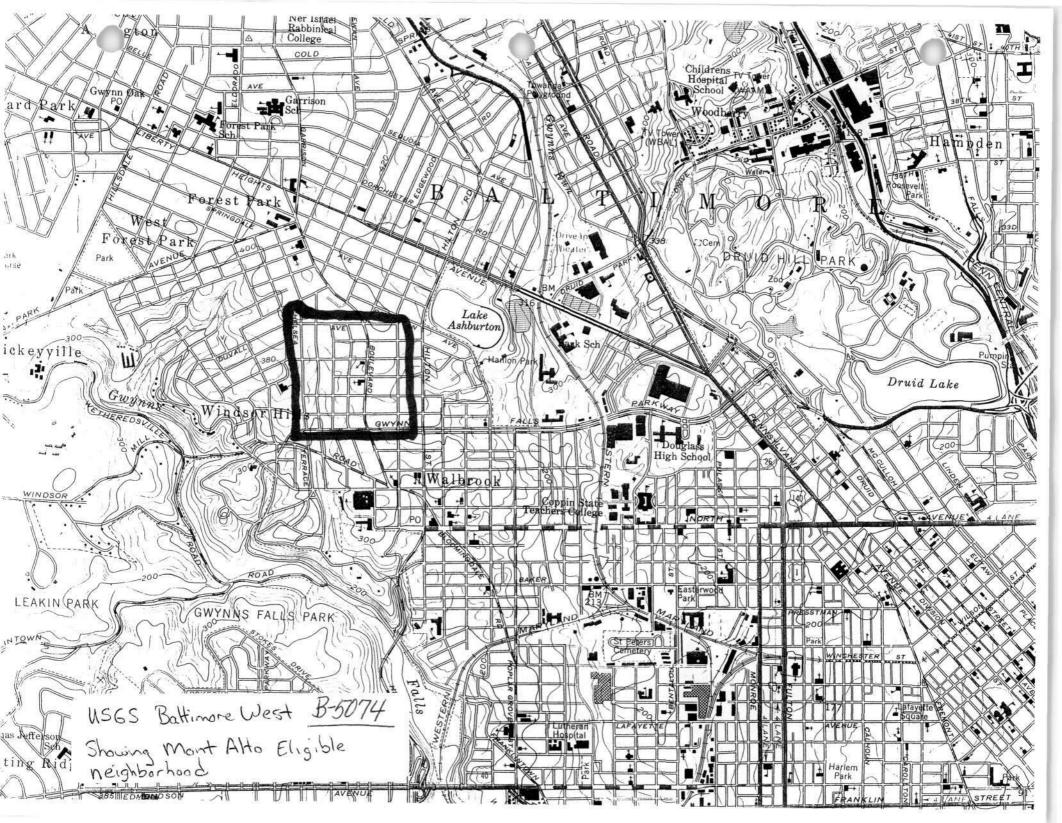
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12/24/1913 – Harry A. Markley was granted a permit yesterday to build a shingle cottage at a cost of about \$3,000 at 2804 Elsinore Avenue. The cottage which was designed by T. Worth Jamison Jr. will measure 28 by 32 feet.

12/19/1913 - Application for a permit to build a 1 ½ story frame cottage at the SE corner of Elsinore and Bateman Avenues was filed by the Provident Realty corporation yesterday. The house will be 28 by 46 feet slate roof, steam heated and will cost \$2,500. Henry J. Tinley is the architect and the corporation the builder.





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